Living Above Ambiguity

The other day I was listening to my favorite talk show radio program, and the topic of conversation was a town that was constructing a time capsule. The question for listeners was, “What would you put in a time capsule that represents life in 2020?” Wow! What a question! Will anyone in one hundred years understand what it was like to live in 2020? The callers suggested various items for the time capsule you would expect, like a mask and hand sanitizer. However, some things called in only had meaning to the caller, like sweatpants or receipts from a canceled vacation. Although we have all experienced this year of 2020, each of our journeys has been unique. The best I can describe this year (so far) is that it has been a year of living in ambiguity. Josh Bacigalupi, a blogger, declares, “the world can be understood and anticipated only sometimes and in different ways. It’s ambiguous.” If that statement doesn’t describe 2020, I don’t know what does. How many ways have scientists, epidemiologists, and infectious disease doctors perceived the course of COVID-19 and the pandemic? Are some of the information they disseminate, right? Are all of these learned people correct, even though they seem to be in direct contradiction? Who do you trust?

Think back to May and the death of George Floyd. The video of Mr. Floyd’s detainment and death seems to be straightforward. Yet, some people perceive something entirely different. How can this be? The presidential election is another example of the unique happenings in 2020. Depending on the political leaning, people perceive the candidates, freedom, and the American way in a, sometimes, polar opposite manner. We live in ambiguity – we only understand the world sometimes, and we know it differently. It can be distressing.

Living in ambiguity can be, well, ambiguous. It can be negative, but it can also be quite positive. New ideas, a different way of looking at a situation, are born out of uncertainty or lack of clarity because of the possibility of multiple interpretations. The book, *Nonsense: The Power of Not Knowing* byJamie Holmes, features the numerous ways that embracing ambiguity makes people more creative and improves their problem-solving. Additionally, living in ambiguity often produces a healthy tension. The challenge of the ambiguity may intensify an individual’s beliefs and core values, thus fortifying their convictions and allowing them to live in ambiguity unscathed.

The down aspect of ambiguity is that it is relative; subjective. Our interpretation of any situation depends on our mindset, our own experiences, and it may even depend on our feelings. The problem is the lack of absolutes. We live in a post-Christian world where each person can decide what truth and reality are. Everything is open to interpretation, and nothing is truly right or wrong. It all depends on our perception.

As followers of Jesus, we must recognize that there are absolutes, something the world denies. These absolutes call us to live above ambiguity. Living above ambiguity is found in the paraphrase of John 15:19 and John 17: 14-16, that we are to live in the world, but not be of the world. Yes, we live in this world, but our interpretation of life is through the absolute Word of God (Jesus) and not through our feelings or even our thoughts.

Our pluralistic world calls us to embrace ambiguity, to interpret for ourselves the way to God, the way to peace, the way to salvation. Living above ambiguity confirms that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There is no other way. This is the absolute truth. Paul removes any hint of ambiguity in his declaration, “ [I am not ashamed of](https://biblehub.com/greek/1870.htm) [the](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [gospel,](https://biblehub.com/greek/2098.htm) [because](https://biblehub.com/greek/1063.htm) [it is](https://biblehub.com/greek/1510.htm) [the power](https://biblehub.com/greek/1411.htm) [of God](https://biblehub.com/greek/2316.htm) [for](https://biblehub.com/greek/1519.htm) [salvation](https://biblehub.com/greek/4991.htm) [to everyone](https://biblehub.com/greek/3956.htm) [who](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) believes…” (Romans 1:16).

Living above ambiguity is what Paul refers to in I Corinthians 2:4-16 when he makes the statement about all believers: “We have the mind of Christ.” Our interpretation of events and circumstances, even ambiguous ones, are filtered through the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ is not the wisdom of humanity. It is in contrast to the wisdom of the world (vv. 5-6). The mind of Christ involves the wisdom of God (v. 7), it is given to us (believers) through the Spirit of God (vv. 10-12), unable to understand them without the Spirit of God (v. 14), and it gives believers spiritual discernment(v. 15). Having the mind of Christ informs our world view.

Trying to make sense of this infamous year is a challenge. Living in ambiguity this year has brought out the worst in humanity – racism, selfishness, hatred, and division. Nevertheless, we can live above ambiguity by having the mind of Christ. Our world needs the Truth. As followers of Christ, we can share the Truth by living above the ambiguity.

The following questions will help you explore this further individually or as a group:

-What would you put in your “time capsule” for 2020?

-What does it mean to live in ambiguity? What ambiguities have you personally experienced this year?

-What role has your faith played in your managing these challenges with God absolutes?

-Based on the scriptures shared, how does having a mind of Christ help us live above ambiguity?

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